

THE COMMERCE CONNECTION

Brought to you by Venture Access, Harford County's dedicated entrepreneurial entity supporting entrepreneurs in their quest to successfully formulate, launch and grow profitable companies.

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HARFORD CHAMBER COUNTY OF COMMERCE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



ENTREPRENEURS SHOWCASE

Adding a Little Spice
Page 2

Welcome to the March issue of the **The Commerce Connection**, brought to you by Venture Access! This month we meet Sandy and Jazz, owners of Island Spice Grill & Lounge and Konoko Restaurant! They share their experience and advice for budding entrepreneurs.

ADDING A LITTLE SPICE

Written by Natalie Pixley

Meet Chef Jazz and Sandy, owners of Island Spice Grill & Lounge and Konoko Restaurant. Chef Jazz dreamed of opening a restaurant and after 3 years of hard work, Island Spice Grill opened its doors in 2014. Shortly after, they renovated the space to include a private dining room, full service bar, and lounge-style dining area. In August 2022, Jazz and Sandy opened a sister entity to Island Spice, Konoko Restaurant, located on The Avenue in White Marsh. Branching out with a new restaurant in a new community has been both exciting and challenging! Sandy shares some advice and resources with us in this interview.

Who would you recommend as resources to entrepreneurs that are just starting out?

"Start with the local Chamber of Commerce! Connecting and networking with other businesses in the community is essential. Additionally, we recommend the local SBA (Small Business Administration). They are helpful in terms of understanding business concepts and helping to develop a solid business plan, which lenders and potential investors require. We also recommend having family and close friends onboard to encourage you and vet ideas. Have a strong team behind you that includes an attorney, accountant, and local banker. Utilize local businesses since they have a vested interest in the development and growth of our shared community."



Any tips for other women-owned small businesses?

"Women should be excited to venture into entrepreneurialism; there's never been a better time to start! Our advice is to start by identifying something you love to do. Earning a living doing what we love makes work fun. After identifying what you love, develop a written plan. Next, ask for help, free help! Don't rely on general Google searches, random blogs, or friends who might mean well, but don't have credentials to provide expert advice. Work with the SBA, your local library, SCORE mentors, local Chambers of Commerce, the Internal Revenue Service, and other trustworthy agencies that offer free resources. If you're new to the world of business, remember to be patient with yourself. Turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones and don't give up! When the time is right and you've put in the work, jump in and trust your ability to succeed"

What goals do you have for the upcoming year?

"We are excited and challenged by being a part of a new community with Konoko. We are working to become better acquainted with the demographics and desires of our consumers so we can build customer loyalty in our new space."



DOING BUSINESS WITH APG

Harford County Office of Economic Development is offering a “know before you go” workshop for the Advanced Planned Briefing to Industry (APBI), an annual event held on Aberdeen Proving Ground that offers a look ahead into contracting opportunities within key tenant commands at APG. The Doing Business with APG seminar will give businesses an overview of what to expect and how to maximize their experience at the APBI event and will inform businesses how to prepare themselves to engage with representatives from APG’s tenant organizations to promote their product or service.

[Register Here!](#)

SMALL BUSINESS ESSENTIALS: ASK THE EXPERTS

Do you have business questions? Ask the experts at the Harford County Office of Economic Development Small Business Essentials seminar! Ask any questions for free and receive expert business advice!

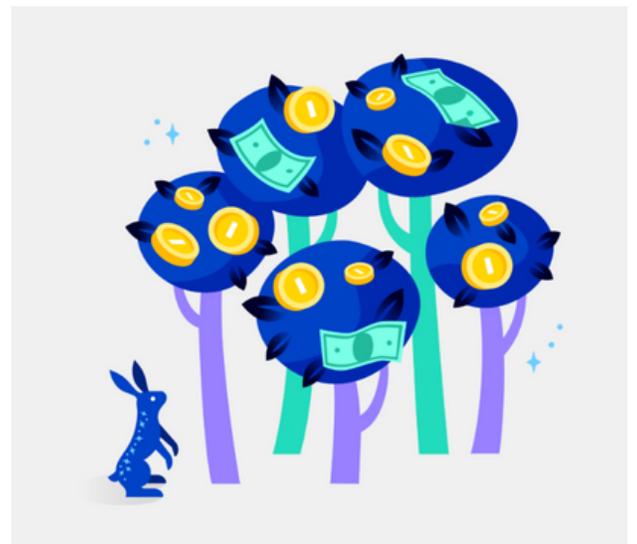
[Register Here](#)



GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Check out these [grant opportunities](#) from Hello Alice!

- Energizing Small Business Grant
- The Catalyst Fund
- Small Business Growth Fund
- and more!





Happy Women's History Month!

Here are 10 great resources for women-owned businesses

[Read More](#)

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